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President Lincoln as War Statesman

By Captain Arthur L. Conger



The State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Separate No. 172

From the Proceedings of the Society for 1916



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By Captian Arthur Latham Conger, U. S. A.

The farther we recede from the era of our great civil strife, the more colossal stands out the figure of Abraham Lincoln upon the dim perspective.¹

All authorities agree with Swinton that an incredible incoherence, largely the work of intrigues, cabals, and political imbecility of the vote-catching charlatans, prevailed in the management of the war.²

His [Lincoln's] "ignorance of statesmanship directing arms" was very great; and his errors were very numerous.³

There exists a divergence of expressed views regarding President Lincoln as war statesman that must be indeed baffling to him who has neither the time nor the equipment to form an independent judgment. Mr. Lincoln is not without his admirers and defenders, but the chief among these, his war-time secretaries, Nicolay and Hay, possess no great competence in military matters and besides, their avowed policy of being "Lincoln men all through,"⁴ has perhaps weakened the force of their arguments. Among the books commonly classified as military histories we see a large number, dwindling as we approach the present, reflecting the view of Lincoln's war-time political opponents, that he is a vacillating

¹ James Schouler, *History of America under the Constitution* (New York, 1894-1913), VI, 1.

² T. M. Maguire, *The Campaign in Virginia* (London, 1908), 23.

³ G. F. R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* (London, 1900), II, 334.

⁴ William Roscoe Thayer, *Life of John Hay* (Boston, 1915), II, 33.



CAPTAIN ARTHUR L. CONGER, U. S. A

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imbecile, at least in military matters; another group, smaller but growing in size, represent Lincoln as having had a positive and willful influence upon the course of the war, but a misguided and pernicious one, owing to his combined ignorance and conceit.

The views of these professedly military histories, mingled in varying proportions, we find swallowed whole by the writers of many general histories who repeat, parrot-like, jibes against Lincoln's imbecile vacillation or bull-headed blundering, as the case may be, without attempting to understand or to analyze the points under discussion. Amid all this harsh condemnation the singular fact stands out that the common people, in whose good sense and judgment Lincoln so firmly trusted, have returned the compliment; they have not only refused to accept the quips of the captious critics but, on the contrary, as James Schouler so aptly puts it, see "more colossal" as time recedes, the figure of Abraham Lincoln, towering above his contemporaries.

In venturing to approach the subject of Lincoln as war statesman, it is not with any claim to present any freshly discovered evidence, nor yet to pit the writer's dicta against the conclusions of others, but rather to point out the scientific method which must be employed in dealing with the subject if we are to obtain a truthful and a fruitful product. That method is to resolve the subject, for the purposes of investigation, not in the first instance chronologically into a series of events, but into its real constituent elements. We need to examine separately Lincoln's strategical conceptions, his tactical decisions, his orders, his combining of land and sea operations, his decisions in regard to the size of armies in their relation to public opinion, finance, and acts of Congress, his dealing with the problem of military organiza-

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tion, his choice of military leaders, his handling of public opinion and of foreign affairs in their relation to the military operations, and lastly the *tout ensemble* of all these which we may denote by the convenient expression "conduct of war." Further, on all these questions we must not stop at the mere decisions, we need also to inquire into the manner of their execution, the framing of the orders and their conveyance, and into the personal relationships both in their outward and in their inner or psychological effects.

Very many have approached the subject not only with a false method but with a lack of proper equipment: without a working knowledge of the principles of historical criticism; or without the necessary technical and professional knowledge of military affairs; or without the required breadth of view. We need to remember constantly, in dealing with the evidence, that Lincoln was, besides President, the leader of a political party, that as such he was, both personally and in his official capacity, the target for all sorts of abuse and vituperation, and that all his acts were called into question and misinterpreted with all the cleverness his political opponents could muster. We need to recall always, in judging the wisdom of a measure, that its success or failure is not, as is often assumed, the correct test of its soundness or appropriateness. Wise measures usually win the game in the long run, yet in the particular instance the bungling measure may turn the trick. Our decision on the matter must depend rather on whether the measure in question was correct in view of the situation as it appeared at that time, with all its uncertainties and difficulties, not on whether it proved correct in the light of after events, nor yet in view of the wider grasp of the situation which the historian easily obtains.

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In dealing with the Civil War we need also to bear in mind that it was not, like so many wars, one over some relatively trivial matter, a dispute over a boundary or a province, or to satisfy some grievance, but one in which absolute conquest was sought on the one side, while on the other the people were willing to endure every sacrifice so long as by so doing there was any possible chance of winning their independence. Very few of the wars of history are of that character and I know of no other war of the sort in which the decision was gained with so few odds on the winning side.¹

Needless to say, in this presentation of the subject I can attempt nothing final or conclusive; it is only possible within the scope of this paper to point the way and state some conclusions gathered in the course of many years' research in Civil War campaigns.

The first problem of war statesmanship is: Who began the Civil War? with its corollaries: Were the moment and the means well chosen? It is notable that the situation on Lincoln's inauguration differed in no material way from that of forty days later when the torch was applied to the magazine of public opinion. The Federal forts, arsenals, offices, and funds had already been seized by the Confederate states, the Union flag had before been fired upon when the *Star of the West* attempted to supply Fort Sumter. A Confederate government had been organized and a Confederate president was exercising the functions of his office.

The popular views held, that the South provoked the

¹ We easily recall how we gained the decision over the British in the Revolutionary War, which was of this class, against infinitely greater odds. Napoleon in all his European wars did not attempt the overthrow of any main government, except that of Spain, and in that instance he was ingloriously beaten, though the odds in his favor were vastly greater, in a military way, than were those of the Union government against the Confederate.

war, or that the two severed parts of the country naturally or inevitably drifted into war, are, I believe, a mistake. Nearly every great statesman has made war when he chose, where he chose, and in a manner to cast the onus on the other side. Bismarck, with his publication of the Ems dispatch, did not with greater firmness or precision choose the moment and the means to bring about the fateful war of 1870, than did Lincoln in his message of April 6 to Governor Pickens, notifying him "to expect an attempt will be made to supply Fort Sumter."¹ True it is that the South struck the first blow, but Lincoln spoke the word that provoked the blow, quietly, with dignity, in an irreproachable manner and, it seems to me, with full knowledge and intent of the consequences.

Let us inquire if it could have been done sooner. Forty days before, Mr. Lincoln had been the leader of the "Black Republican" party and a minority president-elect. During these forty days he had become, in the popular conception and with vastly added prestige, the President of the United States. He had organized his cabinet, secured the reins of government, gained a knowledge of the powers of his office and how to employ them, and, what was equally important, a knowledge of its limitations. He had gained further a mental grasp of the situation, in all its varied complexity, without which the firm and decisive measures following the firing upon Sumter would not have been possible.

On the other hand we must ask if the situation admitted of further temporizing. When we realize that the Sumter garrison would have been compelled, through starvation, to evacuate or surrender when it did in any event, and recall the apathy of the northern states towards

¹ J. G. Nicolay and John Hay (eds.), *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1894), II, 32.

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secession and the violent opposition on the part of the border states to the employment of any coercive military measures which prevailed at the time, we cannot fail to recognize how fatal to the Union cause would have been the degradation of suffering in silence the loss of Sumter and continuing further the dawdling policy which had been inherited from Buchanan. Certainly the moment was well chosen, and as we study the records of the cabinet discussions of the time we see that it was peculiarly of President Lincoln's own choosing.¹

How well the means were adapted to the purpose, not only of initiating the waging of the war to restore the Union, but of unifying at the start public sentiment in the northern states and of driving back into the northern fold all the border states it was possible to save, and with what added effect the proclamation calling out the militia was made to appear in the same issue of the papers which conveyed to the people the tidings of the fall of Sumter, needs no comment here.²

The war once begun, the task devolved upon the President as constitutional commander-in-chief of the army and navy of choosing a strategic plan of action. Mr. Lincoln knew nothing of military art or of the science of strategy, but he had the advantage of approaching the subject with a trained, logical, and unbiassed mind. Under the circumstances he had to seek advice and it was perhaps as fortunate for the cause of the Union that the best advice was at hand as it was that he possessed the capacity to understand and follow it. None the less must we admire foremost his ability to distinguish be-

¹ See *Diary of Gideon Wells* (Boston, 1911); R. B. Warden, *Account of private life etc. of S. P. Chase* (Cincinnati, 1874); J. G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: a history* (New York, 1890), IV; *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, II.

² See J. G. Blaine, *Twenty Years in Congress* (Norwich, Conn., 1884), I, 273, 296.

tween the true and the myriad will-o-the-wisp strategic proposals presented to him, and his firm adherence to the strategic aims then chosen, consistently and logically to the end, in spite of the fact that his cabinet, many of his military advisers, the press, Congress, and the people, were carried away by all sorts of fatuous proposals.

The advice I refer to is that which became termed in derision "Scott's Anaconda." Space does not permit a discussion of Scott as a general, nor of how he came to formulate his plan; for the present it must suffice to point out briefly its merits and the fallacy of the storm of protests which doomed it temporarily to public scorn. Scott proposed:¹

1. "A complete blockade of the Atlantic and Gulf ports."

2. An initial "powerful movement [to be undertaken about November 10] down the Mississippi to the ocean, * * * to clear out and keep open this great line of communication."

3. Thus "to envelop the insurgent states and bring them to terms with less bloodshed than by any other plan."

This plan was not in accord with the pedantic Jominian conceptions of the military literature of that era. These conceptions were stated in their *reductio ad absurdum* form, as applied to the Civil War, by a man named Schalk. According to Schalk,² and a good many others, it was the part of the contesting authorities to form one or two "main armies" which were to maneuver and fight a few decisive battles after which the two governments should agree on terms of peace, after the manner of Napoleon and Francis Joseph in 1805 and 1809. The

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, IV, 301.

² E. Schalk, *Campaigns of 1862 and 1863* (Phila., 1863).

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difference between an ordinary war and a war of absolute conquest was beyond the conception of Schalk and of those who argued in the same vein.

Scott's plan, we must remember, was not a complete plan of action but a policy. Changing conditions, such as the shift of the Confederate capital to Richmond and the advance of Confederate armies to Manassas and Winchester, soon demanded seemingly radical changes; yet, as a policy, Lincoln adopted it and adhered to it throughout the war. This we see not only from his memoranda and utterances¹ but by his acts. Had he been duped by the "single effort" fallacy we should have seen the endeavor to create a huge army. As it was the blockade, to be made complete, had to have the efforts of the navy complemented by the capture of the harbor forts by military land forces. This was done, and done at the expense of the "main armies" and main campaigns. Had the "on to Richmond" cry been seriously adopted by Mr. Lincoln the obvious course would have been to sacrifice the coastal and Mississippi operations to ensure the success of the Virginia campaign. As it was, his first strong and decisive efforts were directed, in accordance with the Anaconda, to the reopening of the Mississippi.²

¹ A long list of references might be given in support of this statement but it is unnecessary since the student can easily find them himself in the *Complete Works*, and *War of the Rebellion: a compilation of the official records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I-IV, 1-130. A few are mentioned by way of illustration. Memorandum of July 23, 1861, *Complete Works*, II, 68 (note: the passive policy in the East and the stress on the movements from Cairo down the Mississippi and from Cincinnati on East Tennessee). Memorandum of [October 1?] 1861, *ibid.*, 83. Letter to commander of Western Department, Oct. 24, 1861, *ibid.*, 86. Letter to Stanton, Jan. 24, 1862, *ibid.*, 118. General War Order No. 1, *ibid.*, 119. Letter Fox to Dupont, *Official Records*, XX, 436. Letter Stanton to Halleck, June 9, 1862, *id.*, X, 671. Letter Lincoln to Seward, June 28, 1862, *id.*, CXXIII, 179.

² In the matter of dates it is interesting to note that Scott proposed to begin the Mississippi campaign Nov. 10, 1861; the first blow in that theater was actually struck three days earlier by Grant at Belmont.

That the Confederate leadership did not soon enough grasp the decisive strategic factors in the war, but adopted the inapplicable Jominian theory, made Mr. Lincoln's accomplishment of his strategic aims the easier but it in no wise detracts from his clear-sighted conduct.

The merit of the plan was that it promised to break down and to destroy the military resistance of the South with the least possible friction: that is, loss of life and property and resultant bitterness. The South was not, economically, a self-sustaining community—in the matter of food, clothing, shoes, metal products, and manufactures—nor did it possess in its railroads, without the use of the coastal and river routes, the necessary arteries of trade; nor could it hope, without the ability to market abroad its great staple products, cotton and tobacco, to make good its deficiencies or to sustain its financial credit for the needs of the war.

If we consider what would have been the results of the Schalk application of the Jominian theory we must picture to ourselves a war lasting many years longer, of doubtful issue, demanding hundreds of thousands more men on the side of the North, and resulting in a ravaged and wasted country, frightful atrocities, reprisals, and unending bitterness. Even with the twenty to one odds which the British had over the Boers, and which we had over the Filipinos, this method, with its unavoidable burnings and destruction, with its concentration camps and their hardships and consequent wastage of life, was only able after several years of exceedingly painful work to bring peace, though the problem in both cases was far easier than the one the North would have had in the Civil War, had the subjugation of the South been undertaken on that basis.

Considered from the standpoint of the North the Scott plan was no less appropriate. The aims and economic

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needs of the people of the central and northwestern states cut off as they were by the Confederacy's blocking of their main trade route, the Mississippi, could not be ignored. Had the troops of Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and even Ohio and Indiana, or the bulk of them, been thrown into the eastern theater, western enthusiasm for the war, and its moral and material support of it, would soon have languished.

As Nicolay and Hay so aptly say:¹ "Every war is begun, dominated, and ended by political considerations; without a nation, without a government, without money or credit, without popular enthusiasm which furnishes volunteers, or public support which endures conscription, there could be no army and no war—neither beginning nor end of methodical hostilities. War and politics, campaign and statecraft, are Siamese twins, inseparable and interdependent; to talk of military operations without the direction and interference of an Administration is as absurd as to plan a campaign without recruits, pay, or rations."

The same principle applied to the East, the aims, aspirations and needs of whose people had to be weighed as carefully as those of the western group. Had the mass of the troops drawn from the East been sent West to prosecute the Mississippi campaign, the support of the eastern group of states would likewise have faltered.² It was essential, as Mr. Lincoln evidently perceived, to

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, IV, 359.

² It is interesting to compare the percentages of volunteer troops raised (before the resort to conscription) in the various localities. The western and Mississippi states put much larger percentages of their military population into the field than did New York and Pennsylvania, while the latter sent a larger percentage than did New England. We see in this the results of the relatively greater efforts made in the West—the consequence of following the Anaconda plan—and the more immediately visible accomplishment of the political and military aims of the people of that section.

carry on the war in a manner to gratify the aims, so far as possible, of the people of every section, while not losing sight of the main issue and the central strategic thought. That the western efforts succeeded so easily while the Virginia campaign dragged so slowly must be ascribed in part to the fact that the military efforts of the Confederacy were more nearly—thus favoring the North's Mississippi and coastal operations—concentrated in the Virginia theater but mainly to the fact that the military talent of the day proved unequal to the task of handling and fighting the large armies which were brought face to face in the Virginia theater. This, rather than the accident of leadership, is the real explanation of the resulting deadlock between the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia.¹

The further working out of the strategic plan was probably Mr. Lincoln's own; though he may have been aided by Scott who appears to have been, in the larger matters, his only trusted military adviser until Grant came to Washington in 1864. It consisted, first, in the recognition of the necessity of gaining the upper hand in the eastern theater, especially in northern Virginia, and second, in the determination to seize and hold eastern Tennessee for the purpose of cutting "a great artery of the enemy's communication,"² and rescuing a loyal people from the tyranny of the rebel government. Both purposes were entirely in harmony with the Anaconda

¹ These armies, from 1862 on, never fought a decisive battle. Fair Oaks, Gaines Mill, Frazier's Farm, Malvern Hill, Second Manassas, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, Petersburg: in no other modern war is there any such list of half-hearted and drawn battles. In every case but one the attacker was either beaten or stood off, and if one side or the other retreated or drew away it was owing to the commander's having lost his nerve, or to some other reason, but not because his was a decisively beaten army.

² Lincoln to Buell, Jan. 6, 1862, *Official Records*, VII, 927.

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idea. The first was a political necessity; the second constituted an objective easy of attainment—as was seen when Burnside occupied eastern Tennessee and sustained himself there in 1863—and most fruitful of results, since its loss virtually put an end to the Confederacy's ability to make war on an extensive scale in the West.¹ Further, the occupation of eastern Tennessee paved the way for a second penetration, or the closing of the coils of the Anaconda to the line Atlanta-Savannah, while the head of the serpent delivered its thrust to wrench away the last remaining coal and iron facilities at the disposal of the Confederacy about Richmond.

The strategic plan was simple enough, but the execution of it, in the absence of a trained army and trained generals and staff officers, and with all the popular clamor for action and speed to be expected in a country under a democratic form of government, was a more difficult and complex matter. Mr. Lincoln had often seemingly to give way to the popular wish but close examination shows that he always kept clearly in mind relative strategic values and adhered to his main purposes with a

¹ The present war, more nearly than any other, presents a situation parallel to that of the Civil War. On the side of the Allies we have seen the attempt throughout, but with ever increasing effectiveness, to blockade and cut off economically the Central Powers from the rest of the world. The attempt to open the Dardanelles, to give Russia an economic outlet and cut Turkey in twain, corresponds to the attempt to open the Mississippi and thereby restore the river trade route to the northwest. The affairs in the Balkans find their counterpart in the operations in Kentucky and Tennessee. But on the German side we find no such concentration of effort on the western front to the detriment of its operations in other theaters as the Confederates made in Virginia. Germany's initial seizure of the coal and iron country in Belgium and northern France would have found its parallel had the South, in 1861, seized and held the mining country of western Virginia and western Pennsylvania. Thus we see on Germany's side a thorough appreciation of, and preparations to meet, the pressure resulting from the adoption of the Anaconda policy by the Allies, and on the Allies' side a slower awakening to its possibilities: the German General Staff has not for nothing numbered among its members the keenest students of our Civil War campaigns.

firmness suggestive rather of a tyrant than of a president. So great was the outcry against even the name of the Anaconda that it soon dropped out of sight. The popular objection to it was that it was too slow, the public mind being unable to conceive that the safest and surest plan was bound to be also in the end the swiftest plan. After Bull Run, and especially after the varied excitements afforded by the campaigns of 1862, no one recalled it, except as a curious vagary of an old man supposed to be in his dotage, or realized that it had furnished Mr. Lincoln his guiding strategic thought in carrying on the war.

The first essential step was to secure the two strategic points vital for the execution of the plan, Cairo and Washington: Cairo as the necessary springboard for the Mississippi movement, Washington because without its possession the Union cause would become hopeless. The securing of both places received the prompt and earnest attention of the Union government. Soon after Sumter men and guns were rushed to Cairo¹ and even before

¹ Message of Governor Yates, *American Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1861 (New York, 1865), 368; Galloway to Walker, Bruce to Davis, Tate to Walker, *Official Records*, CX, 54, 66, 67.

Perhaps the most fatal misstep of the Confederacy, since it was never given any real chance to secure Washington (though Lincoln was fearful for its safety and had to be reassured on this point by Scott), was its failure to take Cairo and thus to secure the free navigation of the Mississippi, lower Ohio, Tennessee, and Cumberland rivers. This act would have led to the dismemberment of the Union Northwest as effectually as its neglect led to the dismemberment of the western states of the Confederacy. It would undoubtedly have secured Kentucky and Missouri to the side of the South and given a real interior line of communications which would have made the military problem of the Confederate commander in the West a comparatively simple one. As it was he had to defend and to attempt to block three separate river lines, the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the Mississippi, each with separate means. The northern commander, on the contrary, was able by using the river system to concentrate and throw the whole weight of the military and naval (river) forces in the West against each separate command in turn, at Henry, Donelson, and Island No. 10, and thus easily to crush it. The situation would have been reversed had the South seized

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that the militia of the District of Columbia had been called out for the defense of the capital.

The next step was to begin raising the necessary troops. As soon as the news of the firing on Fort Sumter was received the President issued his call for 75,000 militia of the several states for three months.¹ Both the number of men and the period for which they were summoned have been pointed out as proof of Lincoln's shortsightedness. I think his critics in these matters have overlooked the conditions. First, the period was all he could call them for under the law; second, the number was all that could be had, organized, armed and equipped, for the time being; and third, the whole thing was a psychological experiment, so to speak, to see if the people would respond. If the number of men called for had been greater and the period longer, the effect might have proved staggering or even benumbing instead of, as it was, stimulating.² In this connection it should not be overlooked that it proved impossible to get even the 75,000 and that only 45,000 were actually mustered in under this first call, some of the states having joined the Confederacy after the call was made and some having adopted a neutral attitude, while very few furnished their full quota. The call on May 3 for 42,034 three years' volunteers for the regular army and navy³ and the recommendation to Congress upon its assembly that 400,000 men be called out for three years show, I think, a full

Cairo at the start, which it had ample forces to do in spite of all the efforts of the President and General Scott to make it secure.

¹ *Official Records*, CXXII, 67.

² Blaine in *Twenty Years in Congress* strongly emphasizes this point in speaking of the difficulty of raising funds for the Union treasury at that time.

³ *Official Records*, CXXII, 146.

comprehension on Mr. Lincoln's part of the magnitude and duration of the coming struggle.

'Having called out the militia the next question was what to do with it. The opinion of most military men of the time appears to have been that it was useless and to have favored reënlisting for three years all the men who would so reënlist and sending the rest back to their homes. This opinion has often been assumed to have been justified by the results, that is to say by the failure of the first operation attempted. The fact is overlooked that the result was due to the technical incapacity of the military leadership which did not know how to march or to fight the command, and that even so the expedition nearly succeeded. Yet, although the blow failed, there is no question to my mind that striking the blow was preferable to inaction. Out of Bull Run sprang Phoenix-like the impetus and the will to conquer, the awakening to the real task and the mighty armies. The same result might have been attained possibly by a success but, success or failure, the blow had to be struck. Psychologically it was as necessary and the result was as electrically stimulating to the North as Sumter.

We cannot here linger over the details of the operations nor point out the relation each stroke bore to the central thought, but before leaving the subject of the Anaconda it will be well to point out with what decision, firmness, and relentless silence the coastal part of the plan was carried out. Whenever the troops could be spared another harbor fort was seized or a fort commanding a port of entry was captured. The force necessary for each expedition was so carefully estimated, the commander chosen with such insight into his ability for the particular mission, and the team-play between army and navy so secured, that but few of them failed. That they were on

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the whole the best conducted operations of the war must be attributed not only to the fine work of the navy but very especially to the personal attention given them by the President.¹

We pass now to the subject of the choice of generals, a feature of Lincoln's war administration which has, if that be possible, been more criticized than any other. It was natural that this should be so at the time when he was held to blame by his political adversaries for every shortcoming of every subordinate in the field and it is not surprising that this view should have crept into our histories, many of which are not exactly temperate in expressing the view that Lincoln was unhappily no judge of military ability. To prove this assertion is adduced his choice of McClellan, Pope, Burnside, Hooker, and Meade as commanders and especially that of Halleck as his chief of staff later in the war. These critics, both past and present, forget that the United States never had during the nineteenth century a school in which the higher art of war was practically taught. The assumption that the cadet school at West Point was a school of generalship was as absurd then as it is absurd now. There was no knowledge to be had in this country of how to lead large bodies of troops in the field or of how to fight them.

Under these circumstances it was almost pure guess-work as to whom to choose and, after McDowell, probably the best man in view at the time, Lincoln adopted the only gauge possible, that of success in the field. McClellan was the first man to win a Union success and his reward for it was the command in chief of the army. But it soon became apparent that he lacked perspective; he could not see the needs of any part of the theater

¹ See C. O. Paullin, "President Lincoln and the Navy," *American Historical Review*, XIV, 281.

of war in which he was not personally present. In spite of this defect McClellan was not lacking in useful points; he inspired confidence in both people and army and, at the time, nothing was more needed. After his failure as an army leader had become patent Pope was brought East and tried. By the criterion of success his was the obvious selection, Grant the other victorious general in the West being at that time under a cloud. When Pope also proved a failure there was no longer any success to go by and it was a case of choosing the least poor, without doubt McClellan. There was the added reason for this that the optimist—and every successful war leader has to be such—could always hope that any man might learn, at least by his own mistakes. McClellan had done so in fact; his Antietam campaign showed that he had learned many lessons, but unhappily these were minor ones, not the important lessons which an army commander must master. Mr. Lincoln undoubtedly gave him a fair second trial and, after his incapacity had been proved incurable, properly relieved him.

Then came the experiment of promoting the ablest corps commanders: Burnside, who had also commanded independently a successful coastal expedition, Hooker, and Meade. None of them proved able commanders; all of them proved workable commanders. There is in fact never any assurance that the best subordinate in the world will make a good independent leader, nor that a capable commander of a small force will be efficient in command of a larger one.

It may be asked then, why did Lincoln, having found a passable commander, not retain him instead of trying a new experiment? Lincoln did in fact keep many passable commanders and used them to the limit of their capacity in preference to risking doubtful but promising

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experiments. But the command of an army imposes a tremendous strain; it wears on a man's nerves and drains even his courage. Lincoln kept closely in touch with his commanders always and especially with the leader of the Army of the Potomac, and when he saw Burnside and Hooker, one after the other, weakening under the strain he wisely did not wait until they had reached the breaking point. Had he done so he might indeed have justified himself in public opinion for their removal, but he would also have risked a disaster to the Army of the Potomac.

If we enquire why Lincoln kept Grant so long in the West we are halted by the fact that, though Lincoln trusted many seeming secrets to many men, in the main things he held no man as his counsellor and trusted no one with his plans and reasons. We can only guess as to whether the general he could not spare because "he fights"¹ was put where he thought the fighter was most needed for the execution of his basic plan or whether he wished further to temper him before bringing him East.

Lastly, in the matter of alleged poor selections, we come to the chief of staff. Halleck is one of those characters whose reputations have suffered at the hands of certain writers of history, such as we are all acquainted with, who, pretentious but unequipped, seek to cover up their deficiencies of learning by violent and venomous invective against minor characters, selected as scape-goats, whom no one is likely to rise up to defend. Some also who dared not paint too darkly the character or deeds of the President have sought to relieve their feelings, and possibly to convey esoterically their meaning, by accusing Halleck of blunders or of unwarrantable interference, accusations which, whether just or unjust,

¹ A. K. McClure, *Abraham Lincoln and Men of War-Time* (Phila., 1892), 180.

should have been made against the Secretary of War or against the President himself. To blame Halleck was, in addition, a conveniently indirect method of casting covert reproaches at the President for keeping so worthless an individual about him as adviser.

Mr. Lincoln has left us no direct praise of General Halleck but his retaining him in an advisory capacity throughout the latter part of the war is perhaps the best compliment, and the best evidence of his appreciation of his utility, that he could have given. General Sherman, who did not flatter anyone merely because he was writing to him, remarked in a letter thanking Halleck for his opinion on some matters: "I value your opinion on matters of importance above those of any other, because I know you to be frank, honest, and learned in the great principles of history. Both Grant and I are deficient in these and are mere actors in a grand drama, the end of which we do not see."¹

Grant was always reserved towards Halleck for their personal relations had been unfortunate, but his correspondence shows that he felt towards him the highest deference and respect.

The portrayal of Halleck in the usual Civil War critique is thus far out of the perspective. It is indeed possible to present him as a pathetic figure, deplorably lacking in military knowledge, but so it is all the rest of the generals, including Grant and Lee, in the light of present-day military science. The village sage may appear a sorry impostor transplanted to academic circles, but that does not prevent his being the village sage. No account of the Civil War generals is a true one which does not ascribe to Halleck a foremost place in the matter of the military erudition and science of the day such as it was.

¹ *Official Records*, LXXIX, 203.

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He furnished the President on the technical side precisely the elements he required and was probably the best man for the purpose who could have been found. Nor, in the matter of practical achievement was he behind; in the year 1862 virtually every victory gained by the North, from Henry and Donelson to Antietam, had been won by his subordinates acting under his direct orders.

As the war progressed we find Lincoln studying works on military art, brooding over maps, and applying his mind to the understanding of the details of the operations under his own direction as well as of those of other wars. Probably no army officer during the Civil War labored with such diligence to master military theory as well as the practical details of campaigning as did Lincoln, and with him it was never a matter of swallowing whole the opinions or formulae of others: he sought principles and how to apply them to the particular case.

It might seem at first sight that the strategist of the war had nought to do with tactics. Perhaps in handling an army composed of highly trained officers such might be the case. But with a raw, untrained, volunteer army, such as was ours, its units commanded by officers ignorant for the most part of the higher elements of their profession, it became essential for the President to be certain of his own knowledge, how the troops ought to be disposed, what might fairly be expected of them in the matter of accomplishment, and what was the worst that might happen to them in case of a disaster. Only by thus intimately understanding each situation could he act intelligently when every commander from Yorktown to St. Louis was shrieking that he was outnumbered and overwhelmed and demanding reënforcements.

As early as October 24, 1861 we find him with complete grasp of the local peculiarities and easy mastery of the

tactical principles involved advising the commander of the Department of the West how to dispose his troops and pointing out what was tactically impossible of accomplishment.¹ From Mr. Lincoln's correspondence with his generals a very interesting and thoroughly up-to-date book of tactical principles might be compiled; and it would also be a very witty one, for, with his originality of expression he put his suggestions into language as picturesque as it was terse and vigorous: for example his advice to Hooker, "I would not take any risk of being entangled upon the river, like an ox jumped half over a fence and liable to be torn by dogs front and rear without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other." And his later pointing out, "If the head of Lee's army is at Martinsburg and the tail of it on the plank road between Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, the animal must be very slim somewhere. Could you not break him?"² Lincoln saw the tactical fault of Lee and the tactical opportunity it afforded, but his perception proved too far beyond that of Hooker for him to be able to see it, even when pointed out.

Some of his tactical ideas were not only ahead of his generals but in advance of his time, as instance his letter to Buell in which he says, "We have the greater numbers and the enemy has the greater facility of concentrating forces upon points of collision; that we must fail unless we can find some way of making our advantage an overmatch for his; and that this can only be done by menacing him with superior forces at different points at the same time, so that we can safely attack one or both if he makes no change; and if he weakens one to strengthen the other, forbear to attack the strengthened one, but seize and hold

¹ *Complete Works*, II, 86.

² June 5 and 14, *ibid.*, 344, 352.

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the weakened one, gaining so much."¹ This conception did not accord with the formulae which had been compiled from the peculiar experiences of lesser forces in the European theater in former times. Hence it was long jeered at by the pedants. But I do not think the European general staffs of today could put into clearer language the guiding tactical principle by which both the contestants have been acting in the present war and by which Mr. Lincoln and his subordinates had to act if they were to win.

In the matter of orders there is a popular tradition to the effect that success in military matters demands that the superior shall do all the thinking and that subordinates shall execute precisely what they are told and nothing more. In the lesser operations of former times, when the commander of relatively small forces could keep in touch with and direct the marching and fighting of all his units, and when subordinate commanders were not well trained and could not be trusted, such a policy could be and was successfully carried out. When Napoleon tried to conduct operations by that method with the larger forces and in the larger theater of 1812 and 1813, he speedily came to grief. Lincoln, even in the second year of the war, commanded more men than Napoleon ever commanded, and no small share of his success must be attributed to his having grappled with and correctly solved the problem of how to deal with the mighty forces under his orders.

I refer to the principle of substituting missions for specific directions. This amounts to assigning a subordinate his task but leaving him independent initiative

¹ Jan. 13, 1862, *Official Records*, VII, 928. A further development of this idea in connection with the advantages and disadvantages of the offensive and defensive respectively, and the relative numbers required for each, will be found in his letter to Halleck of Sept. 19, 1863, in *id.*, XLIX, 207.

to think out his problem and to solve it in his own way and, so far as practicable, in his own time. Such orders are now termed "directives" or "letters of instruction." Mr. Lincoln did not so term them but the greater part of his military letters and telegrams fall distinctly into this category. He usually stated at the end of such messages "this is not an order" to convey unmistakably the idea that he was not conveying a rigid, formal order as orders were understood at that time. Moltke also, and quite independently of Lincoln, perceived the need of this method of procedure in handling the larger forces of modern times and so trained the Prussian army, especially during the five years following our Civil War, that he was able in 1870 to conduct the German operations by methods identical with those Lincoln had employed. Today, in any well-trained army, this principle of assigning missions, instead of prescribing measures, extends all the way down the hierarchy.

Mr. Lincoln's orders, and letters ending in "this is not an order," have been made the butt of no end of ridicule by pettifogged minds who sought to compare them unfavorably with those of Napoleon without realizing that he had solved the secret of big business as applied to war precisely where Napoleon had failed. These criticisms are just the sort one would expect from a country storekeeper unable to grasp the methods of the head of a department store and animadverting against him because he did not conduct his larger business like a country store. Mr. Lincoln was simply dealing with big business in a big way. His methods were entirely appropriate and he deserves the distinction of being the first to employ them successfully. Nor does the fact that he did, upon occasion, give precise orders, especially when dealing with the forces about and covering Washington, constitute

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any contradiction to this statement. In any operations, however large, occasions will always arise when the central directing power must deny the initiative of subordinates, give explicit directions and demand implicit obedience. Mr. Lincoln correctly perceived those occasions and applied the proper stimulus when it was needed.

His correspondence with the generals was, however, by no means confined to movements ordered or suggested. His letters contain timely information, suggestions as to how to meet special difficulties of the situation, bits of personal counsel. Where friction is evident they seek to oil the machinery by smoothing things over or patching up misunderstandings. They nearly always give the impression or contain the direct statement that the government is doing and will do all in its power to aid the recipient in performing his task. Out of the multitude of his collected letters only a small percentage show the use of the lash and then only as a last sharp stimulus after all other means had failed. Efforts to spur on the laggard or startle the comatose into activity by warnings of imminent danger, to hearten the discouraged by glowing pictures of possible success, to give assurance to the overcautious by pointing out the weaknesses of his opponent, to arouse ambition, confidence, and energy in each, are far more frequent. As to praise, he was almost pathetically eager to give it and did give it, quickly and in full measure, for the slightest success or even genuine endeavor.

In estimating the influence of Lincoln on his generals it is impossible to consider separately his correspondence and his personal intercourse with them. He was not one of those who, placed in high position, shrink from personal contact and seek to hide behind the typewriter or the pen. He both welcomed and returned the visits

of his generals and made frequent trips to both larger and smaller headquarters when not beyond ready reach from the capital. Nor were these visits mere flying ones; often he remained several days with some general in the field. The result was that, with the exception of his political opponent for the presidency in 1864, I know of no general officer who did not look up to him with reliance and regard. All felt that, no matter what happened, if they could only see the President and explain things to him, all would be right. And with personal regard went, hand in hand, respect and esteem; we do not find these men wittingly among Lincoln's detractors.

As with the generals, so with the officers and men. He did not hold himself aloof, but visited camps, inspected formations, issued timely proclamations, and held easy intercourse with all. No better proof of the confidence he inspired in his armies could be desired than the fact that before the election of 1864 his party leaders in the doubtful states wanted men furloughed home from the army, sure that these men would vote and win votes for Lincoln; nor was this confidence misplaced. Many a European monarch and minister would give much for the secrets of Lincoln's success in dealing with the problem of crowd psychology as applied to armies.

To turn to Mr. Lincoln's handling of one of his more specialized problems, that of organization, we find a seeming tendency towards multiplication of separate commands, culminating in 1862, followed by a gradual unifying of commands until, in 1864, General Grant was assigned to command the whole. These changes have been seized upon to prove various theses: those who look for timid vacillation on the part of Lincoln find no excuse for the multiplying and attribute the unifying to a re-

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sponse to the growing demands of public opinion; those who follow the Comte de Paris in seeing in Lincoln the blundering egotist who "ended in believing himself capable of directing military operations"¹ explain the multiplying by a thirst for exercising command and the unifying by Lincoln's becoming "conscious of his own incompetency"² and gradually relinquishing control.

If we consider each change in organization, however, and the reasons for it, in the light of the situation as it appeared at the time, we shall not find much open logically to serious objection. Take for instance the reorganization upon the removal of the Army of the Potomac to the Yorktown peninsula in 1862. Washington had to be covered, Pennsylvania and western Maryland had to be covered, West Virginia had to be protected, and it was desirable to threaten an advance via Fredericksburg. There were two ways of accomplishing this: first, by a central army thrust well forward, which was attempted afterwards under Pope; second, by a cordon of troops covering strategic points. For the time being there were not enough troops for the central army so the cordon system was a last resort. If we examine the relative sizes of the various corps and divisions of observation, and their distribution to localities, we find little room for disagreement and no room for condemnation, considering the missions assigned the various bodies. Fewer troops might have sufficed to cover West Virginia but Fremont's command was destined to occupy East Tennessee also.

The organization into Mountain Department (West Virginia), and Departments of the Shenandoah and Rap-

¹ Louis Philippe Albert d'Orleans, Comte de Paris, *History of the Civil War in America* (Phila., 1875-88), I, 573.

² *Id.*, II, 245.

pahannock (west and east respectively of the Blue Ridge, in northern Virginia) was a perfectly natural one, following the distribution of troops.¹ Both distribution and organization received substantially the approval of General Scott when Lincoln went to consult him about the matter in June, 1862. The fact that Jackson was able to break through the cordon and afterwards to make good his escape has been assumed by some writers to be proof of the faults of organization and orders by the President; such a test is far from conclusive. The object of the dispositions was to prevent the capture or even the serious threatening of Washington, or the invasion of Union territory. This was accomplished and, with the removal of the main army under McClellan to Fort Monroe, it is difficult to see how it could have been more effectively accomplished with the same number and quality of troops. In the course of the operations other objectives were set the troops, namely the cutting off and destruction of Jackson's command. No one at the time realized Jackson's object any better than Lincoln² and if, in spite of that insight, he chose to attempt Jackson's capture, he was only anticipating Grant's similar decision two years later.³ That the attempt failed is not justly to be attributed to faults of either plan or orders,

¹ *Official Records*, XVIII, 43; amended by General Order No. 62 on June 8, 1862, *id.*, XV, 541.

² Lincoln wrote to Fremont on June 15, 1862: "I think Jackson's game—his assigned work—now is to magnify the accounts of his numbers and reports of his movements, and thus by constant alarms keep three or four times as many of our troops away from Richmond as his own force amounts to. Thus he helps his friends at Richmond three or four times as much as if he were there." *Ibid.*, 661.

³ Grant wrote from City Point on July 9, 1864: "I should like to have a large force here; but if the rebel force now north can be captured or destroyed I would willingly postpone aggressive operations to destroy them, and could send in addition to the Nineteenth Corps the balance of the Sixth Corps." *Id.*, LXXXII, 92.

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but to faulty leadership of the troops; even so it was worth the trying.

In considering the appropriateness of the changes in organization we should not neglect the factor of the ability of the generals available for assignment. As the commanders waxed in capacity and efficiency it became profitable to increase their responsibilities to a point which it would not have been profitable to do earlier in the war. But in saying this there is no intention of implying that Mr. Lincoln did not himself learn anything about organization during its course. The whole center of gravity of military operations inevitably hinges on the organization and the location and resulting viewpoint of the commander and his staff. Mr. Lincoln became more keenly appreciative of this fact with his widening experience and made skilful use of his knowledge.

Upon Grant's appointment as lieutenant-general in March, 1864, Lincoln and Grant met for the first time. There is a more or less common supposition that from that date Grant took over, so to speak, the conduct of the war and that the President sat back and watched him, without really knowing or understanding what was being done. This impression is given, more or less unintentionally I believe, in Grant's final report of the war operations¹ and is reinforced by the more remote and hazy views in his memoirs. In these Grant says that the President told him that "all he wanted or had ever wanted was someone who would take the responsibility and act, and call on him for all the assistance needed. * * * [Stanton] and General Halleck both cautioned me against giving the President my plans of campaign. * * * I did not com-

¹ *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (New York, 1885-86), Appendix, 555-56.

municate my plans to the President, nor did I to the Secretary of War or to General Halleck."¹

This impression is strengthened by the fact that Nicolay and Hay, in their rather precise account of Grant's visit to Washington, make no mention of any private interview between the President and Grant and quite unnecessarily deny that Mr. Lincoln said one word to him "as to what route to Richmond should be chosen."²

Let us examine the other evidence on this point.

1. Grant asserts in his *Memoirs* that the President did "submit" to him "a plan of campaign of his own." His account of the interview further does not give the impression that it is the one described by Nicolay and Hay and at which they were present.

2. Grant, presumably, had numerous interviews with Halleck who probably understood the President's ideas and wishes better than anyone else.

3. Before Grant came to Washington he had in mind a campaign of penetration from the rear via Suffolk-Raleigh.³ What he did was to carry out the plan Lincoln had been trying to put through since the spring of 1862.

4. In his orders to Meade for the campaign he employed a paraphrase of Lincoln's orders of the year before to Hooker.⁴

5. As to the President's not knowing Grant's plan,

¹ *Id.*, II, 122-23.

² Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, VIII, 340-43.

³ *Official Records*, LVIII, 41; *id.*, LX, 394. See also Willey Howell, "Lieut. General Grant's Campaign of 1864," in *Military Historian and Economist*, I, 115.

⁴ Lincoln wrote to Hooker, June 10, 1863: "I think Lee's army, not Richmond, is your true objective point. If he comes toward the upper Potomac, follow on his flank and on his inside track, shortening your lines while he lengthens his. Fight him, too, when opportunity offers. If he stays where he is, fret him and fret him." *Complete Works*, II, 345.

Grant's instructions to Meade were: "Lee's army will be your objective point. Wherever Lee goes, there you will go also." *Official Records*, LX, 828.

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Lincoln said in an address on May 9, 1864:¹ "I think, without knowing the particulars of the plans of General Grant, that what has been accomplished is of more importance than at first appears. I believe, I know—and am especially grateful to know—that General Grant has not been jostled in his purposes, that he has made all his points, and today he is on his line as he purposed before he moved his armies."

No scholar who has become familiar with the painstaking care with which Lincoln chose his words can doubt the meaning of that statement.

6. In other respects Grant's plans reflected the views of Lincoln. Grant called for simultaneous movement on all fronts; so had the President's War Order No. 1, two years before.² Grant called for destroying the enemy's war resources—another name for the Anaconda. Grant's idea was to hammer continuously, "attrition"; so had been Lincoln's, and it was perhaps because he had found in Grant the best executor of that idea that he gave him the over-command of all the armies.

In weighing this evidence we have to consider that Grant's memory was often at fault in the statements in his *Memoirs*, and that he had a habit of, so to speak, dramatizing his recollections by inserting quite imaginary and sometimes impossible conversations.³ We observe

¹ *Complete Works*, II, 520.

² Grant's statement in his official report that before he came to Washington "the armies in the East and in the West had acted independently and without concert, like a balky team," seemingly implied a denial of any effort at coördination prior to his arrival on the scene. He must have forgotten in so writing that orders do not necessarily create coördination; no balkier team than Grant's three armies in Virginia, with Butler bottling himself in Bermuda Hundred and Sigel and Hunter now chasing and again being chased up and down the Shenandoah, is to be found in the Civil War.

³ In saying this there is no wish to imply on Grant's part any conscious intent to deceive the reader. It was simply the common tendency of human nature to

also that what we may call Grant's declaration of independence, at this point in his *Memiors*, is not borne out in other parts. Speaking of a later occasion on which he had shown Lincoln a message he says, "Mr. Lincoln, supposing I was asking for instructions, said," etc., and a little later he mentions, "I do not remember what the instructions were the President gave me, but I know," etc.¹ These passages, brief as they are, do not suggest a picture of the President as a dumb, semi-informed observer of events. Further, while Grant became quite willing to overemphasize his own value to Lincoln, and the part he had played, no other might encroach. He denies that Stanton was necessary to Lincoln to prevent his being imposed upon and adds: "Mr. Lincoln did not require a guardian to aid him in the fulfilment of a public trust."² This last represents, I believe, Grant's real attitude which was at bottom one of thorough loyalty to Lincoln.

As regards the statement made by Nicolay and Hay, those gentlemen may have had a motive in the effort to controvert the statements of General Taylor who had blamed Lincoln for the heavy losses incurred by Grant in the Wilderness campaign.³

It seems clear then that Lincoln knew, in general terms, and approved Grant's plans. Whether Grant, consciously or unconsciously, shaped his plans to meet Lincoln's views, or quite independently came to that way of thinking, the evidence is perhaps insufficient for determining.⁴

tell a good story, in doing which, long after the event, anyone is liable to magnify his own part and the credit due him.

¹ *Grant's Memoirs*, II, 532-33.

² *Ibid.*, 537.

³ Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, VIII, note 1, 343.

⁴ Capt. Willey Howell who has devoted much study to Grant's plan of campaign is of the opinion that, while Grant was uninfluenced by anyone in his

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It was like Lincoln to give Grant a wide latitude; and it was characteristic of the soldierly Grant to carry out loyally throughout the views of his superior, so that seeds of friction did not exist.

Whatever the influence of Lincoln upon Grant's plans prior to the initiation of the campaign of 1864, there is no doubt that he left the conduct of the main eastern army, as well as the specific instructions to be given Sherman and others, entirely to Grant. But he did not for a moment relax his vigilance in following every move and after Grant had reached City Point Lincoln made frequent visits to his headquarters. How closely he remained in touch with the military requirements of the situation may be gathered from his telegram to Grant of July 20, 1864: "Yours of yesterday, about a call for 300,000, is received. I suppose you had not seen the call for 500,000, made the day before, and which, I suppose, covers the case. Always glad to have your suggestions."¹

Yet, though Grant took a vast amount of work off his hands, and freed him from many burdens, the correspondence, slight as it is, suffices to show that Lincoln held the military reins during the last nine months of the war quite as firmly as ever in his own hands.

Lincoln's influence on our foreign relations during the war has been well brought out in the main by Nicolay and Hay. As to his sense of relative values, his firmness on essentials—such as the nonrecognition of the Confederacy by Great Britain and France—and the appropriateness and timeliness of his dealings with foreign governments there can be little dispute. How closely

conduct of the war west of the Alleghanies, in 1864-65 he shaped his plans of campaign in the Virginia theater to meet the views of either Halleck or Lincoln. See *Mil. Hist. & Econ.*, I, 278.

¹ *Complete Works*, II, 551.

he watched the situation abroad and sought to coördinate the campaigns and the diplomatic situation is suggested by his efforts to get Rosecrans to do something in December, 1862, before the meeting of the British Parliament, so that all the lost ground might be recovered by that time to strengthen the hands of the government in its diplomacy.¹

Nor, in watching Europe, did he neglect to keep an eye out to the southward. In August, 1863 he wrote to Grant at Vicksburg: "In view of recent events in Mexico, I am greatly impressed with the importance of reëstablishing the national authority in Western Texas as soon as possible."² Grant, however, was found pre-occupied with his more immediate surroundings, so Lincoln turned to Banks and finally sent him to re-establish the Union authority on the Rio Grande at Brownsville.³ Naturally but few references to the inter-relations of military operations and diplomacy are to be found in the official correspondence and the extent of this coördination has not yet been brought to light. It would make a good topic for a history seminar.

Lincoln's handling of the other departments of the government, especially the Treasury, which had to furnish the sinews of war, his dealings with Congress, his influence on public opinion, are all essential parts of his conduct of the war, and the military campaigns, as well as the naval operations, will only be viewed in their correct perspective when considered in their relation to the whole. Of all the battles of the war Antietam was perhaps the most important in its political, diplomatic, and popular

¹ Halleck to Rosecrans, Dec. 5, 1862, *Official Records*, XXX, 123.

² *Id.*, XXXVIII, 584.

³ Seward's letter of instructions to Banks is of especial interest at the present time. Nov. 23, 1863, *id.*, XLI, 815. See also on this, Halleck to Grant, Jan. 8, 1864, *id.*, LVIII, 41.

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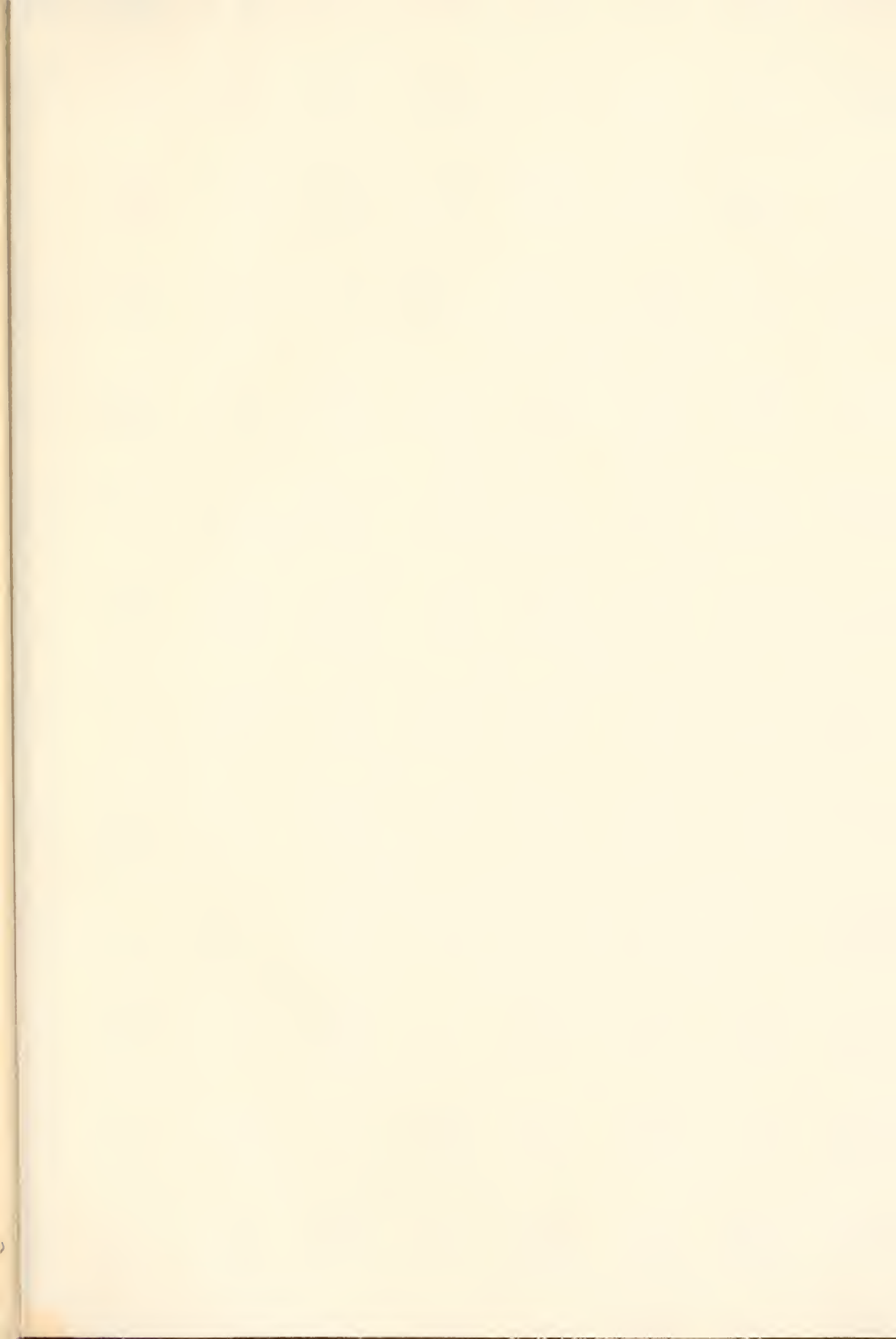
significance; but it was the Proclamation of Emancipation which gave it that significance, just as it was the call to arms of the militia which gave its meaning to the fall of Sumter. The chief consequence of Gettysburg was, not the clearance of the enemy from Pennsylvania, but that it made it possible to put into effect the Draft Act.

Amid all this handling of weighty questions we find the President still able to give time to lesser ones, to send an appropriate and steadying reply to the resolutions of a meeting of disgruntled New York citizens in Albany; to indite a long letter of thanks and assurance in answer to an address from an appreciative body of English workmen in Manchester;¹ to test powders; to experiment firing with a rifle; to advise concerning the designs of ships; to consider innumerable private cases and grievances; and, in general, to meet anyone and everyone who cared to see him. With a rare detachment and unaffected simplicity he assumed the blame for all failures and shortcomings of his subordinates, while for all successes he readily yielded the credit to others. Is it any wonder that he was able to inspire the efforts of a vast, inert heterogeneous people, to organize great armies and fleets, and so to direct them as to destroy slavery and reestablish a popular Union government in the land?

To some my estimate of Lincoln as war statesman may seem that of a purblind enthusiast, who has succumbed to the inevitable temptation to laud to heroship the central figure of his research, and to paint in only the high lights of merit and success, leaving out all shadows. I can only answer that, just as the accusation of his contemporary political detractors—that he was but a common politician who owed his reputation to the group

¹ Frank Moore, *Rebellion Record; a diary of American events, etc.* (New York, 1864), VII, 298, VI, 420.

of able statesmen by whom he was surrounded—has fallen away, destroyed by cumulative evidence, so will it be in matters military. The companion idea that in military matters Lincoln was but a bungler, surrounded by able generals whom he failed to appreciate or to support, is still rampant; by the nature of things views in this field are readjusted more slowly. But I am confident that when all the evidence has been gathered and weighed, the entire picture filled in and all the lights and shadows balanced, we shall see the figure of Abraham Lincoln stand out even more colossal upon the dim perspective.







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